

Governor Locke speaks out in support of state personnel reform

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Hello, I'm Gary Locke:

As Washington's governor, I have been privileged to work with a very talented and hard-working group of people for nearly eight years—our state employees.

I believe Washington has the top state employee team in the country.

This isn't just my opinion. We have the national recognition and awards to prove it. I am proud of the dedication and skill that our state employees bring to their jobs.

Every day, they ensure health care for more than 900,000 vulnerable children and adults. They teach more than 200,000 students at state colleges and universities. State employees protect children and the elderly from abuse, they make sure our food is safe, help low-income families and displaced or injured workers get back on their feet, guard our prisons, and patrol our highways.

They help communities improve local economies, protect our environment and natural resources, keep our transportation system moving and so much more.

I have seen first-hand the many pressures that state employees face. Government must be adaptable to the changing needs of our state's 6 million residents. And it must be accountable for both the public's trust and the investment taxpayers make in state government.

That's why the Personnel System Reform Act is so important. This new law was approved by the Legislature in 2002, with the strong support of state employee labor organizations.

It's the biggest change in the state personnel system in 40 years. We've improved the system across the boards—from job classification, to hiring and compensation, to collective bargaining and competitive contracting.

Like all great organizations—both public and private—we face many challenges. We are striving to remain effective and respected in a rapidly changing world. We want to attract outstanding people to state government.

And we want to help all employees succeed in their important and difficult jobs. Too often, our current personnel system has hindered us in addressing these challenges rather than helping overcome them.

A lot is happening as we reform the state personnel system.

We call the reform effort "Washington Works." Our goal is to improve the efficiency of state government. We will do this by providing a better workplace and a better chance for state employees to succeed in their careers.

While all parts of the reform law will be in place by July 2005, many important developments are happening in the near future.

Keep up with the progress we're making by visiting the Washington Works website—
www.washingtonworks.wa.gov

I recognize that many state workers feel anxious about the coming changes. I urge everyone to learn as much as possible about Washington Works. Overhauling the system not only will sharpen our state government's competitive edge, but will also give everyone the freedom to do the best job possible.

Washington Works is good for our government, our employees and our state. With Washington Works, we are making a great workforce even better!